

Spring 2026 Humanities Colloquia



The History of Anti- Semitism

Michael Levin

HONOR 350 – 001

TTh 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

Why do people hate Jews? Is anti-Semitism different from other forms of prejudice? And what does it mean to be Jewish in the first place? In this colloquium we will explore the historical roots of these questions, using various primary sources as a springboard for discussion. We will start in Biblical times, and cover such topics as the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, and events in modern America. There will be guest lectures from other professors in the History Department, who will bring their own expertise and experiences to the class. The emphasis of the course will be on discussion, with a final project to be determined.

Religion East and West: The Big Questions (and Answers in Words and Art)

Paula Levin

HONOR 350 – 003

TTh 12:15 pm – 1:30 pm

We will examine the teachings of Eastern and Western Religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam - in their attempts to guide us to answers to The Big Questions: What is the meaning of life, how should I live, what happens after life, what is God. We will experience the great world of artistic expression of religious ideas through literature, virtual tours, visual media, and music. Guest lecturers will enhance our understanding of religion as it is practiced today. The emphasis of the course is on class discussion of what we experience and react to.

Humanitarian Social Media-Yes or No?

Carrie Tomko

HONOR 350 – 004

MWF 9:40 am – 10:30 am

Social media brings instantaneous news, information, and entertainment. Is it accurate in detail? Is it even true? Is it responsible "journalism"? Does it benefit humanity? Does it require accountability? This colloquium looks at the good, bad, and even the "ugly" of social media, studying the impact on culture.

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Are We Our Brains?

Nathanial Blower

HONOR 350 – 006

MWF 10:45 am – 11:35 am

In this class we will discuss a number of topics related to the question: Are we our brains? The central focus of the course will be a dispute between Peter Hacker and Daniel Dennett. Hacker argues against the habit in neuroscience of treating brains as though they were people: assuming that brains think, feel, perceive, intend and do all manner of things that ordinarily we say people do, not their brains. Daniel Dennett defends the neuroscientists, claiming that Hacker pays too much attention to what we ordinarily say. As we discuss this dispute, we will touch on a number of traditionally philosophical questions about free-will, the afterlife, morality, subjectivity and more. On the more scientific side, we will discuss topics in neuroscience, computer science, mathematics, linguistics and more.

Adapting the Mystery: The Mystery of Adaption

Matt Wyszynski

HONOR 350 – 801

M 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

The classical mystery story/novel is a genre known for its strict conventions and the obligation of the author to “play fair” with the reader. This colloquium will examine some of the works of a few canonical mystery writers (Doyle, Christie, Stout), analyze how these authors establish, reinforce, and expand the limits of the genre. We will also move on to adaptations of these well-known works—as TV shows, films, podcasts, and even board games—to study how one genre and medium is adapted to other forms. There will be class discussion, several exams, and a final project.